

Please accept this testimony on HB5326 from an interested party in the United Kingdom.

I am writing to you in regards to HB 5326 from Europe as an atheist and as someone who considers himself to be liberal – I am against capital punishment and I strongly support abortion rights for women – with a fairly libertarian in outlook. But I am urging you not to pass HB5326.

Why? First, look to Belgium and the Netherlands, not Oregon. There is still a healthy respect for human life in the United States; Connecticut would become only the fourth state in to allow assisted suicide. We can admit that some of the predicted problems in Oregon have not occurred; very few people there avail themselves of this “choice” and there is little evidence of individual abuse. But passing this Bill will take a crucial step down the road of normalizing voluntary death.

Where voluntary death is normalized, we can see that it does not stop at the terminally-ill who have six months to live. The Belgian parliament recently passed a bill, twelve years after legalizing euthanasia, allowing euthanasia for terminally-ill children of any age. Such a move was uncontroversial in Belgium. Professor Peter Singer of Princeton University, who favours legalization, observed about the move: “I don’t see it as anything so dramatic. The biggest step is to legalize euthanasia in the first place.”

Singer, at least on this point, is right. The dramatic step was taken twelve years ago. But the culture has not changed in the United States, and campaigners there are careful only to argue for the six-months-to-live rule. Where the principle has been established, in the Netherlands, campaigners contend that everyone over the age of seventy should have the right to an assisted suicide (Uit Vrije Wil – Out of Free Will – received over 117,000 letters of support in 2010). In Belgium, euthanasia has been extended to a [44-year old transsexual](#) who was disappointed with the results of his operation and [45-year old twins](#) who were going blind and did not wish never to see each other again.

Can that happen in the United States? The Belgian and Dutch people are not utterly without morals but they have no defense against appeals on the basis of suffering. The door is already open. Think of the arbitrary nature of the “six months to live” rule and the emotive individual cases upon which support for assisted dying is based. People can suffer with seven months to live more than others with less time. Why not those who are tired of life? What about those who are profoundly disabled but not dying? How can we tell someone who has been depressed for many years that they do not suffer enough to qualify?

Of course, there are very difficult individual situations – fortunately, there are fewer and fewer as the ability to suppress pain progresses – where a doctor may take the compassionate decision in the last hours, days or even weeks of life to stop a patient’s suffering. No one denies that and there is no legislation that can adequately cover these situations. But it will be ironic if the brave legislature that outlawed execution even for the worst criminals who have committed appalling crimes re-introduces execution for those who simply feel their lives to be wretched.

I urge you to defeat HB5326.

Yours sincerely,

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